

Younger Artists Series

Alexander Brook

Edited by William Murrell

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO





YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES

NUMBER 2

ALEXANDER BROOK

Those interested in the *raison d'être* of this monograph will find in the first number of the series to which it belongs a »General Introduction« by Mr. Harold Ward. With as much brevity as is consistent with definiteness, this Introduction seeks to formulate the intellectual position of the editor, and to outline the critical background against which he has placed the various figures dealt with in »The Younger Artists Series«.

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YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES

NUMBER 2

ALEXANDER BROOK

BY

WILLIAM MURRELL

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR AND
24 REPRODUCTIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE

WOODSTOCK, N. Y. 1922
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM M. FISHER

YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES

Already Published

- Nr. 1 Ernest Fiene
- Nr. 2 Alexander Brook
- Nr. 3 Peggy Bacon
- Nr. 4 Yasuo Kuniyoshi

In Preparation

- Nr. 5² Henry Lee Mac Fee
- Nr. 6 Ben Benn
- Nr. 7 Edward Fisk
- Nr. 8 Henry Mattson

ALEXANDER BROOK

The paintings of Alexander Brook offer a nice problem for analysis: why does this gay-spirited young man paint such lugubrious personages? Is he simply the rarely met opposite of the better known melancholy-humorist? or is there something well worth study and appreciation in his personality and work?

His history is brief. He was born twenty-three years ago in New York of Russian parents, and has been painting and drawing since he was twelve. But it would be beside the point to ignore him on account of his youth: he has functioned in a definite and authentic manner, and that is an all-sufficient ground for consideration.

His is a high-strung, vehement, and riotous nature; impatient of delay and plodding methods. His lithe, nervous body and close-set, curious eyes are never in idle repose. In fact his whole being, mental and physical, seems ever straining at and plunging forth from an invisible leash —

a line that becomes more elastic and attenuated as his self-knowledge and power increase.

Of concentration and coherence as such, there is no sign in the effervescing energy of his temperament; but his mind and his eyes alike are ever flitting far and near with bee-like force and persistency, seeking, seizing, and storing precious notes of appearances and forms that interest him. And his manner of painting is consistent with this restless activity. He uses no models, but makes numerous pencil drawings of things conceived or seen. Then, something pleasing him in any of these — a woman's hat, or a chimney pot, — a start is made on canvas, and from that first shape he develops the whole painting, the color coincidental with the form.

Curiously enough there is always something droll or whimsical inextricably bound up with the genuine beauty of his color. To regard him as a painter of humorous subjects is to miss the artist in him entirely. It is not the line in his work that is droll, for there is none. It is the fusion of subtle tones and bold juxtapositions of color with otherwise incongruous shapes, forms, and features, — and all done in a manner reserved, restrained, and grave.

His paintings, when exhibited last January at the Brummer Gallery in New York, were characterized as sullen, gloomy, and depressing. Not one of his critics even unintentionally used the word lugubrious, with its hint of the whimsical or the droll.

Brook, despite this, still likes to think of his work as American. Yet the complete absence of response to both its humor and its quality points to the conclusion that his outlook (or shall I say inlook?) is clearly unamerican.

Perhaps one might find herein some trace of the Russian blood in this American youth having its expression. It is as significant as it is certain that the characters he creates are less American than European, and that they would be better appreciated across the Atlantic than here in the land of their plastic origin.

However, I would not be thought in the above to maintain that Brook's work is »old hat« in any sense of that term. Far from it — this youngster is, despite his leanings toward Daumier and Picasso, in the vanguard with the Expressionists. And yet if I told him so he would probably ask: And who the devil are they?

ALEXANDER BROOK
REPRODUCTIONS

Frontispiece in Color — Petit Dejeuner
(Owned by Mrs. C. R. Bacon)

Paintings:

1. The Poet
2. The Flowered Hat
3. M. Bourdelle
4. Head
5. Miss Strenley
6. Self Portrait
7. Landscape
8. Irene Platt
9. Torso
10. M. and Mme. Bourdelle
11. Laborer's Hut
12. Albert
13. Figure Study
14. Landscape
15. Portrait
16. Mother and Child
17. Figure Study
18. Nocturne

Drawings:

19. Peon
20. Child
21. Head
22. Pretty Baby
23. Windy Day
24. Head





THE POET

Oil 1922



THE FLOWERED HAT

Oil 1919



M. BOURDELLE

Oil 1921



HEAD

Oil 1921



MISS STRENLEY

Oil 1920



SELF PORTRAIT

Oil 1919



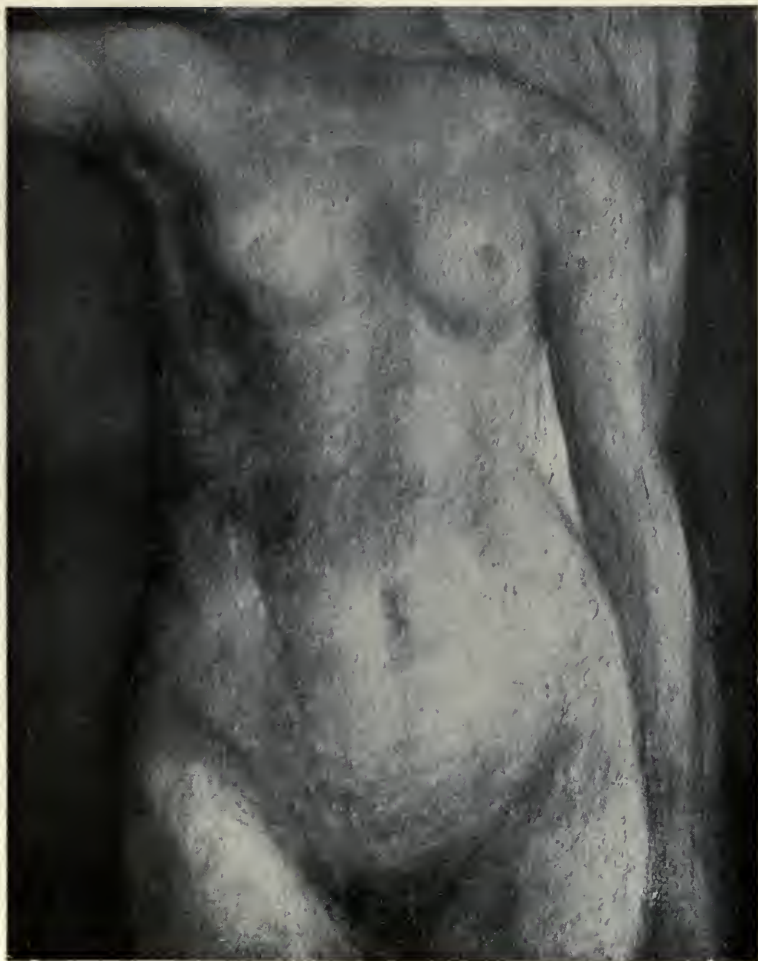
LANDSCAPE

Oil 1910



IRENE PLATT

Oil 1920



TORSO

Oil 1918



M. AND MME, BOURDELLE

Oil 1921



LABORER'S HUT

Oil 1921



ALBERT

Oil 1920



FIGURE STUDY

Oil 1919



LANDSCAPE

(Owned by H. E. Schnackenberg)

Oil 1919



PORTRAIT

Oil 1922



MOTHER AND CHILD

Oil 1919



FIGURE STUDY

Oil, 1919



NOCTURNE;

Oil 1916



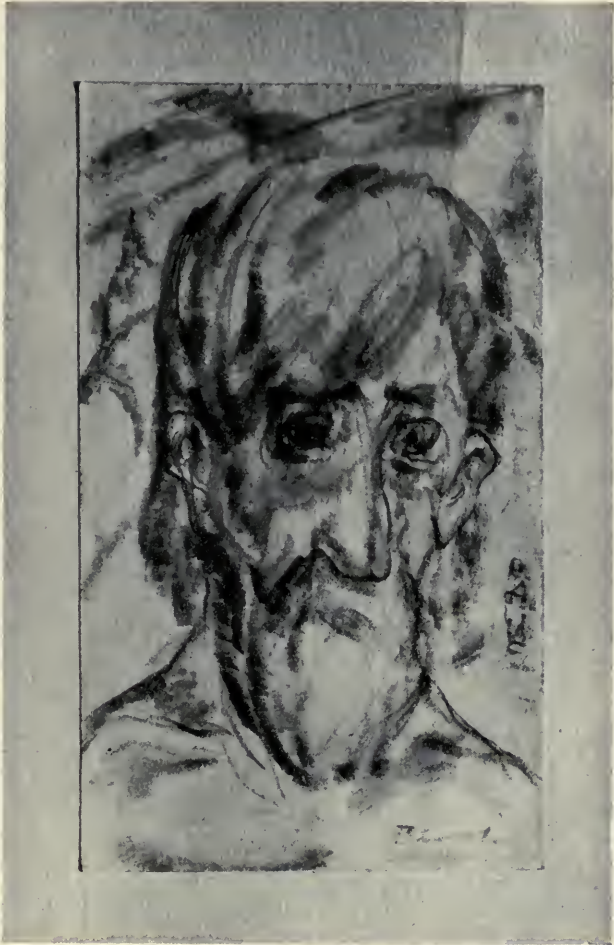
PEON

Ink Drawing



CHILD

Pencil Drawing



HEAD

Pencil Drawing



PRETTY BABY

Ink Drawing



WINDAY DAY

Ink Drawing



HEAD

Crayon Drawing



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